

BLUSHING BRIDES IN LINE

WITH DIFFIDENT BRIDEGROOMS AT THE CITY HALL.

Studies in the Marriage Line—All kinds of people taking out licenses—Women who pay the fees—Many semi-elopements—Official Views of Marriage.

If you have everything in your flat but a marriage license and want one in a hurry to complete what you may think is an artistic furnishing it is dollars to doughnuts that you will be terribly disappointed—not in the license, which more than lives up to its reputation, but in the matter of the time necessary to secure one.

For these are busy days at the Marriage License Bureau at the City Hall. People are getting married who never married before, and in spite of the financial panic, perhaps because of it, dollar bills are really a drop on the market.

With occasional intervals from the moment the doors open in the morning until they close at night there is a long and interesting line made up of two sexes, who, however they may be divided in the matter of woman's voting, are perfectly in accord apparently on this other interesting subject. The line extends at times in a serpentine curve through the City Clerk's office into the rotunda, where it breaks ranks when fatigue overpowers it, and when the noon hour strikes a part of it exits the luncheon that the woman, the dear domestic creature, has thoughtfully provided.

As may be easily imagined by any one familiar with the busy days of the municipal officials, the length and the interest of this marriage line give no end of trouble to them, for they have to dart in and out of their particular rooms every time a new couple appears to see if there is any way they can help Clerk Scully, and if there isn't, why there isn't.

If the bride-elect happens to be especially good looking the trouble for some occult reason is increased and the offers of assistance more and more strenuous. If there is an envious man in that whole building it is the City Clerk. There isn't an official in the City Hall who wouldn't change places with him.

The marriage line is as free from class prejudice as the Constitution of the United States. Neither color nor age is discriminated from it. Any man who has a dollar and a girl can get in, but he must have both of them in evidence.

Clerk Scully won't accept proxies for either one, and if a woman gets a letter to the very door of the City Hall and then he turns and runs she will have to run after him, for even if she can point out his scudding coatails through the window to Mr. Scully that makes no difference either. The City Clerk has a hand of iron under the velvet glove, a sweet, soft voice that hides an inflexible purpose.

Mothers and guardians appear with those under age. Representatives of various charitable societies bring in the newly landed from Ellis Island, Catholic priests from foreign sections of the city tow reluctant providers to be and spell their names for them.

Little groups of Hungarians with bright

blush, blush long and hard with a color that was never purchased at any cosmetic counter. They giggle too, and occasionally chew gum.

The bridegrooms have a way of their own of showing their feelings on this momentous occasion. The majority of them look as if they wanted to run and didn't dare. Nearly all look sheepish—more worn, captured, not capturers. The few that preserve an impassive expression vary it with glances of admiration at the women who have got the best of them.

Once in a while Eighty brings in Eighteen and guides her reluctant feet. He pretends not to see the plying looks cast upon her by the official staff behind the

reason for not coming home nights. He could just move around a corner, change his name from Brown to Jones, and unless wives 1 and 2 happened to attend the same mixed ale party years might elapse before he was ever found in.

Chief Clerk Scully is for marriage licenses every time. So is one of his assistants, who by some queer occult law is called Heart, a matter which should be attended to by the Society of Psychical Research. The third of the staff cast his vote the same way, but showed a little tendency toward pessimism when he talked the matter over.

This was found to be due to the fact that at the time this article goes to press not one bit of wedding cake had been sent to



"WON OUT."

window grating or the ludicrous mistake that is sure to be made when the mother of the bride is assumed to be the bride herself.

Colored ladies and gentlemen that look as if marriage was the funniest thing on record in resplendent attire take precedence of the stranger couples who give the Plaza or the Netherlands as their residence. The father who has lost a daughter fumes

the staff, although licenses and transfers to the number of 2,572 had been handed out. He thinks that shows New York marriages in a pretty mean light and he wouldn't be hushed up by Clerk Scully, who seemed to think that it was not quite up to them to make complaints in these early days.

The third member turned out to have a bark worse than his bite and really displayed a fatherly interest in faltering couples. In the latter part of the afternoon he got quite worried because a young man and a maid had mistaken the bureau to which they should apply and had come over from Brooklyn when they should have gone to the Borough Hall there.

He explains to them the reason for this and glances apprehensively at the clock when the young man takes out his watch and mutters something about meeting a man on business at 5. He has no patience with that fictitious personage, says "Let him wait," as if he was a brother of the girl, and a brilliant idea striking him yells after them, "I say, take the tube."

The tube is still new to Brooklynites, and the man and the maid stop, clasp hands in their excitement and shriek "Tubel" together. The girl a little in the lead, so that it sounds like an extract from "Hamlet." Then they turn and run tubward, girl springing first in the van, with her head over her shoulder, like a Burne-Jones panel.

"There's apt to be a holdup in that

shape when you see that the loose ends are tied."

It is earlier in the day that he manifests the same patience toward a stout, panting woman who hurls herself toward his particular window and stands gasping there like a breathless fish.

"Want to get married?" he asks, peering around the corner of the open door to catch a glimpse of the recalcitrant one.

She casts the glance that a respectable married woman of middle age would be apt to cast under such circumstances.

"He weighed 288 pounds when he went off to work at 6 o'clock this morning and as I ain't had no word that I'm a widder lady I don't see any reason why I should be insulted in this way."

"I was just joking," explains the pacifier. "Perhaps you've mistaken the place."

"No, I ain't mistaken the place, but I run ahead to get things ready. Talk about eels; if I ever see a man— Well, it wasn't so when I was married. Could have had my pick of ten, and only took the one I did to get rid of him."

At this moment a thin, scrawny woman, leading a procession of one, comes tripping in with an expression of triumphant satisfaction. The procession looks about as happy as a wet terrier with a tin can tied to its tail chased by a mob of small boys. His eyes are glued to the floor. He twirls his watch chain and occasionally coughs nervously.

"My sister," the first comer introduces them—"and this is the man she's going to marry."

"How soon will the marriage take place?" asks the clerk professionally.

The spinster looks at the man. The man looks at the floor, and the manager of the expedition says briefly:

"Oh, I guess we'll get it over to-day. Might as well as long as we had to come for the license. No use making two trips, hey, John?"

John says something inaudible to the

but they are very chivalrous in their interpretation of this act.

"It's only a dollar, anyway," one of them remarked, "and men have so many ways in which to spend their small change."

"Do we ever get counterfeit money?" Never but once. Then a man gave us a fifty cent piece and a brass check, but it was simply that he made a mistake. He couldn't have done it on purpose, for the girl was as pretty as a pink."

At this moment the only real happy-go-lucky bridegroom that the day has so far exhibited comes striding in. His hat is set rakishly on the back of a cluster of black curls. His overcoat has a fur collar and a Persian lamb lining. There is a faint, intangible, evanescent odor of the very latest thing in cocktails about him. He raps jocularly with the end of a gold headed stick on the window ledge.

"Hello, boys!" he calls in. "Is this the place I come to to get killed? It's coming off next Tuesday, sure. American beauty roses, church send off, champagne on rap, and the girl—well, little old New York ain't seen anything like her for a long time!"

The staff stops eating confectionery long enough to explain that it will be necessary for her to come down there and let them judge for themselves. They infer that he has given a prejudiced opinion.

"Oh, hang it all," he chirps, "can't you fix it up, without bothering her? Why she's got her dress and fixings to think of. I know her color and her age and how old her parents would be if living, because they are. Fix it up for us and we'll send you a bid and print 'no presents' on the coupon."

Chief Scully is pleasantly obtuse. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!

Nothing can cast a shadow over the cheerfulness of this bridegroom-elect.

"All right," he says as he hears the ultimatum. "Now is there any particular hour that you would suggest for the lady to make her appearance in this classic and refined atmosphere to answer all the catechism that is necessary before she can become



"EACH MAN TO HIS OWN TASTE."

tube," the staff member murmurs to no one in particular, "and if there is they'll just miss it. If they miss it, they'll have to wait until to-morrow, and then who knows what might happen! That's the trouble with living in Brooklyn; it makes marriage just that much more trouble."

He wears a worried wrinkle quite a while and then says suddenly: "Think I'll telephone over and see if they got there. Not that it makes any difference, but it does make one feel as if things were sort of ship-

to the effect that John has been terribly nervous ever since he had the measles.

John proves this by leaving the window without paying the required fee. The spinster also forgets it, but the manager puts it down without reluctance. It is easy to see that she believes that getting her sister off her hands at that price is cheap enough.

After they go out and the staff are hounded by the repetition of the question, they have to admit that women do sometimes pay,

the proud bride of me dual coronet?"

It is suggested that unless he comes early, as early as 10, the probability is that he will have to wait a long time in line.

"You don't mean to say that there are as many people as that who want to get married?" he inquires. "That's news to your Uncle Willie. I thought I was the only one. Well, here's luck to 'em."

He lifts an imaginary bumper and dances out of the room.

Uncle Willie is followed by a loverlorn

couple who come forward to the grating hand in hand. They have been standing in the line half an hour and have been utterly oblivious to the fact that there are other applicants besides themselves.

Every once in a while he presses her hand and she responds with a rapturous glance. If she falls him, he whispers something in her ear which brings the blush and smile he hungers for. It is plain to see that there never was, is or could be anything or anybody in the whole wide, wide world for him but her. The stock of man's fidelity goes up a point in your estimation.

There is not a trace of embarrassment in the man's demeanor as he faces the inquisitor through the grating window where many bigger or not better men before him have trembled and grown pale. He tells his age, 28; mentions white, as his color, gives occupation, place of residence, names and countries of father and mother, and does not forget to squeeze the girl's hand at each interrogation and such answer. But when the question, "Is applicant a divorced person?" follows there is a horrible pause. During it the girl's hand is dropped. The applicant turns fifteen different colors and squirms into the bargain.

He admits the truth of the accusing glance cast upon him by the bride to be. He admits it through the bars. He also admits that he has not thought to bring the divorce decree with him and tries to say airily that he had almost forgotten about it. The attempt is a lamentable failure.

The clerk is sorry that the matter must be held up, but announces that he cannot

Why not take it at a walk? The only reasonable explanation is the financial panic.

"Why?" And the staff, authorities on such matters, look sorry for such crass ignorance. "It's much easier, ain't it, for a semi-fashionable family to let the daughter elope? Then they don't have any bother with the wedding or any expense appalling thereto."

"It's easy for the bridegroom; too. No bridesmaids' presents, no stag supper at a swell hotel, no wedding garments. Oh, I tell you, there's more than one couple have fixed it up that way and the families have been discreetly on." The runaway bride has struck the highest note so far in beauty and style. If you have any doubt on the subject it is dispelled by the invasion of three of the city officials who take advantage of a few moments leisure and come in ostensibly to ask some question relating to municipal reform, in reality to find out who she is.

"I tell you she's a peach," they remark in chorus, "but didn't think much of him, did you-all?"

For the first time the Titian haired secretary has something to say.

"Didn't think much of him?" she repeats. "Why, he was the only good looking man I've seen in City Hall since we commenced to pass out licenses."

Before the delegation have time to argue the subject the attention of the staff is attracted to an elderly man who steps gingerly through the room, casting a look of disgusted apprehension at the two or three women who are occupying space with their worthless presence. If over woman



THE MARRIAGE BROKER.

egally grant the license until the omission is remedied and turns to the next couple.

As the disappointed pair go out the woman has a reproachful glance in her eyes, mingled with tears. The man is humble and ashamed.

"Just a youthful folly," he murmurs. "You know what men are. I don't have to pay her alimony, for she married again," he ends with an attempt to cast some sunshine on the shadowed path.

"If you had only confessed," whispers the young woman. "It's the deceit, the lack of confidence. It's the first falsehood you ever told me."

"It was just to save your feelings, dearie," but apparently the time honored explanation fails of its intended object and when the story gets out there are bets made as to whether they will return.

A self-possessed couple follow these. It is quite clear that if such a misdemeanor as a forgotten divorce should crop up in the catechism it will have no appreciable effect on the worldly wise amiability of the two.

Their travelling bags creak with newness. The young woman gives her residence as the Waldorf-Astoria, and they answer the questions nonchalantly, with little gossip remarks to each other in between as to the relative merits of certain hotels as living places and the prices of long fur coats.

"Runaways," say the staff in chorus as they go out.

"How do we know? Oh, when a couple come in here and say they are going to make the license to marry good immediately, have only a hotel as residence and new tops all over them it don't take a Sherlock Holmes. What puzzles us, though, with couples like that, is why they run. They ain't chickens."

later was written so that she who runs might read it is imprinted on his countenance.

The staff seem blind to its obviousness and ask gently:

"Is the lady with you?"

"The lady? What lady?" he growls.

"The lady you are going to marry."

"Marry! I wouldn't marry the Queen of England."

Of course he couldn't without making a bigamist of that erstwhile person, but he is wrought up by the question to such a degree that he doesn't seem to care what innocent person he makes suffer.

"Marry!" he repeats with disgust, then suddenly wakes up and mutters: "I've got the wrong place, I guess. I'm looking for Ways and Means." He darts out with a certainty that could give points to an alchemist in a favoring breeze.

The last visitor gives a little touch of tragedy to what has been a rather amusing performance. He is a young man who wipes the beads of perspiration from his forehead, although the day is cold. His voice is hoarse with emotion and he can hardly articulate.

One can scarcely catch the syllables here and there as he speaks to the City Clerk, who is most sympathetic with his distress.

"My sister—ran away—good reason to think he never had a divorce from the other woman—"

After the closing hour has struck the member of the staff who is really an authority on the marriage question and is said to be compiling a record of "Brides I Have Known" breaks out into poetry. His verse is short and to the point. He says it is not original, but it sounds so:

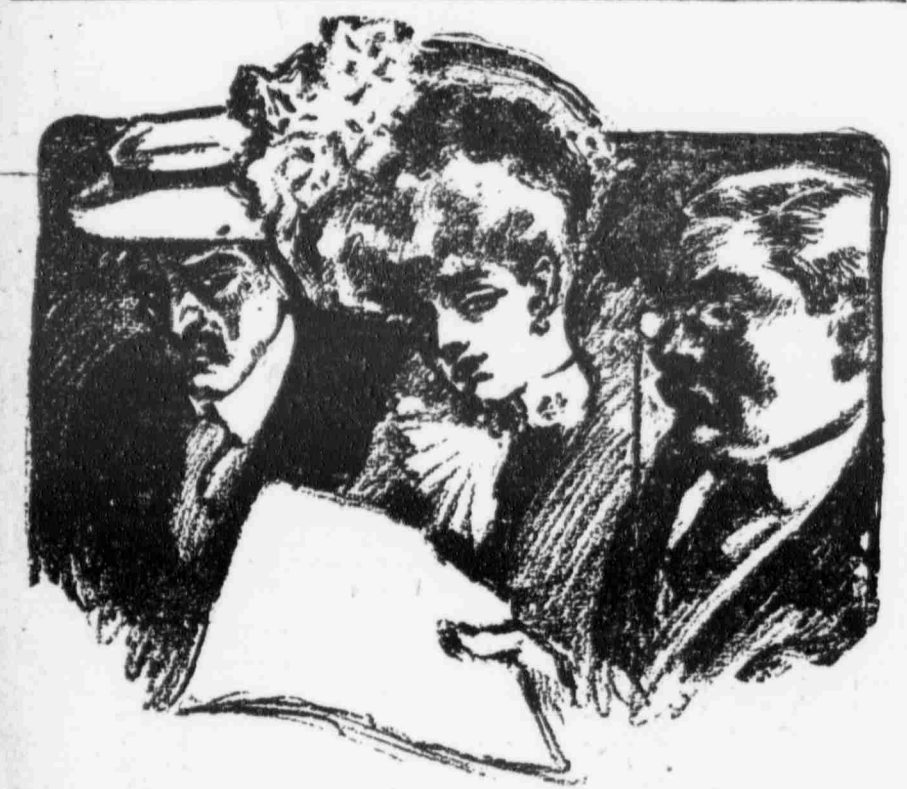
"Is not fine hats nor shiny shoes:
The handsome bride who handsome does.

dinner did. Week ends now drag almost everybody out of town from Saturday till Monday, whereas comparatively few people kept a country house open, even if they owned one, when I was a girl."

"In this respect there is no difference between Saturday and Sunday except that many do attend church Sunday morning. Out of door sports are the most popular with those who like them, and there are dozens of well known society women who will never permit a card game of any sort in their house on Sunday, but on the other hand there are many more who give Sunday luncheons followed by bridge and Sunday dinners followed by bridge who at their week ends have the card tables in evidence all the time."

"Not in as many instances as is supposed, though, do the players put up money stakes on Sunday. Personally I know men who will not play any card game during the week unless there is a chance to gamble a little, but who on Sunday prefer not to play for money."

"On the whole the present day Sunday observances are more wholesome, I think, than those of five years ago, because more time is spent out of town and in motoring, which keeps one in the open air."



TROUBLE OVER THE DIVORCE DECREE.

shawls for headresses and bright neckties on the masculine contingent chatter in their native tongue. Some of them are provided with interpreters and they buzz about them, eager with questions and comments. It is a great occasion for them.

The Italian bride-elect is usually younger than those of other nations and the license party is always large and impressive. Occasionally a marriage broker brings in a woman and a man young enough to be her son. He has some story ready for the City Clerk, who cross-examines him to little purpose, his ready answers covering every emergency.

Once in a while a young woman comes in and looks about with a worried air. He has not kept his word. She comes again and again, and in the interim you see her walking up and down the corridor outside watching the opposite entrances. This episode never happens in the other case, for the woman is always punctual.

There seems to be some good reason for the old fashioned adjective applied to the bride. Nine out of ten of them do

Impatiently for the moment to come when he can ask to look over the records of the day before. A weeping mother clasps the hand of the only child and looks apprehensively at the coming partner. Tragedy and comedy are to be found in plenty.

Clerk Scully in the inner room, where only Vanderbilt, SUN reporters and the like are allowed to enter, pushes his gold rimmed specs up into his gold rimmed hair and says emphatically that he intends to make marriage a sacred institution in New York city. To that end he has applied for an extra appropriation for clerical aid, interpreters and breathing space.

He wants to give the applicants plenty of room; as it is they have room enough to change their minds in. He wants to give them every possible opportunity to make one out of two ones.

He says that in the past perfectly awful things have happened on account of the laxity of the law in this respect. For example, a New York man might have as many as three wives at a time and if he belonged to a lodge or a club he always had a good

be, the latter passing into history about six years ago. They have gone to keep company with the one time fashionable Sunday midday dinner which thirty years ago or less was served in the houses of representative families like the Frulings, Evaratos, Evartses, Fishes, Remsons, Emmets, Van Rensselaers, Stuyvesants, Rutherfordes, Jays, Livingstons, Bronsons, Anthonys, Van Burons, Heckschers, Boeckmans, Duers De Poysters, Astors, Schermers and so on through the list of the then social leaders.

"When I was a child," said the lady referred to, "the Sunday dinner was quite a feature of the week. Usually it brought all the family together."

"Married sons and daughters came home for it, also unmarried sons whose business or profession kept them away on other days. Very few formal dinners, though, took place on Sunday. It was not a favorite day for entertaining at dinner nor for making many calls in the afternoon."

"At that time society did more walking on Sunday afternoons than it has ever done since or probably will ever do again. Few of the richest people who owned the finest carriages dreamed of taking them out on Sunday. Churchgoers walked to church and back, and after the dinner, which was apt to be prolonged, almost everybody but old folks went walking, the favorite promenade being up and down Fifth avenue."

"Twenty years ago if one wanted to see any particular person of a Sunday afternoon all he or she had to do was to take a

stroll on the avenue. Nowadays, of course, much headway. One of the first to in-fashion carefully avoids Fifth avenue of a Sunday except at church time, but it was not so then, and the sight was a very pretty one."

"No, it wouldn't be possible to revive the custom, for the reason that everybody is now doing something else on Sunday afternoon. Mind you, I don't mean that the Sunday midday dinner and the absence of much entertaining were due to religious scruples only, for they were not. In society then as now there were many persons who had no religious scruples whatever."

"One of my aunts, with whom I spent the greater part of my time, seldom or never put her foot in a church, and her husband never went, and yet when the evening dinner came into fashion, say about twenty-five years ago, and some members of society not of the oldest families more adventurous than the rest began giving a series of Sunday evening musicals, my aunt and many of her friends equally worldly frowned on those musicals and refused to attend them. My aunt said they were not good form."

"As a matter of fact, the Sunday night dinners afterward given at her house were about as lively as the dinners one will find anywhere now, but she was a great stickler for good form. It was about then that the more conservative social element began to find themselves in a more or less popular minority."

"Newcomers, with larger fortunes and a disposition to spend money and have a good time, made their influence felt, al-

though they had to take many a snub from the conservatives before they made staid Sunday evening musicals I remember was Mrs. Paron Stevens."

"She had a splendid house, plenty of money, a decided talent for entertaining. Nevertheless at first her invitations were refused right and left."

"How common of her to give Sunday entertainments!" said a friend of my aunt. "So said a good many other persons who afterward became quite noted for Sunday gaiety at their houses."

"In the shade of Mrs. Stevens ever hovers around this part of the country of a Sunday now it must have a good chuckle at the expense of society. That is only one instance of course. There were other husbands who introduced music at their Sunday evening dinners and certain other diversions after dinner who caused less criticism than Mrs. Stevens simply because they were better known."

"Then came the Sunday dinners in the new restaurants and hotels which were opened and included small private dining rooms. At one time to dine even at Delmonico's of a Sunday would have given society in general a shock."

"Thirty years ago gay Sunday suppers at a public restaurant were practically unknown, and not till after evening dinners on Sunday came into fashion did Delmonico or other restaurant men show much disposition to cater to Sunday trade."

"After that, however, it was very different, and during the next five years Sunday observance in society underwent a tremendous change. Men began to pay their

dinner calls on Sunday afternoon, which meant that instead of an informal dropping in of relatives or neighbors of both sexes for informal chat drawing rooms began to fill up about 4 o'clock with men mostly."

"The Sunday afternoon parade fell off because every woman, young or old, wanted to stay at home to receive her two friends. It became an understood thing—up to within the last two or three years I mean—that Sunday afternoon was the most likely occasion on which one's men friends would call and the time that women would be found at home. These afternoons frequently were turned into musicals, impromptu and otherwise, by the smartest hostesses, as everybody knows, and they were far from being as dull as the average week day reception is."

"What with the elaborate Sunday luncheons, Sunday afternoon at homes, late Sunday dinners followed by a programme of some sort—cards and music, or music without the cards, or cards without the music—New York society's observance of Sunday began to come in for a lot of uncompromising criticism, much of which was undeserved."

"For the reason that a proportion of the very gayest and wealthiest hostesses were New Yorkers at all. They came out of the West and from other directions. Also that New York society now has to recognize and cater to hundreds of visitors from all over the world who are accustomed to the Continental Sunday and would expire with ennui were they confronted with the Sunday observance of twenty-five years ago; also

SOCIETY'S SUNDAY CHANGED

BUT SOCIETY GOES TO CHURCH AS MUCH AS EVER.

Midday Sunday Dinners of Twenty-five Years Ago—Sir Mrs. Paron Stevens' Sunday Musicals Made—Era of Sunday Calls—A Rush Out of Town Now.

A comparison of the present Sunday observance with Sunday observance then, twenty, thirty or more years ago shows, for one thing, the effect that a rapidly increasing population has on New York's social customs. A woman well known socially traced the day some of these changes from the time New York society was well within the 400 mark and not socially three times every winter at Ward McAllister's subscription dances held in the old Delmonico ballroom at Twenty-sixth street. That was before the influx of new people had become very noticeable and before splendid private ballrooms began to multiply, to say nothing of restaurant and hotel ballrooms easily hired for private uses.

The Patriarchs and their imposing and somewhat more exclusive successors, the Assemblies, had their day and ceased to